



August 30, 2005

Two are sentenced in five bank robberies

A federal judge has sentenced two men for bank robberies in which the robbers handed tellers notes demanding money. **Charles M. Powell**, address unknown, was sentenced to 84 months in prison for two robberies in March and **John Chiellini**, of Central Falls, was sentenced to 63 months in prison for his role in three robberies in January and February.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentences, which U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith imposed on August 25 in U.S. District Court, Providence. Judge Smith ordered Powell to make \$8,415 restitution to the banks he robbed and ordered Chiellini to make \$5,400 restitution.

In May, Powell and Chiellini, who were charged separately, pleaded guilty to federal bank robbery charges.

At Powell's plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney James H. Leavey said that the government had proof that Powell handed tellers at two banks threatening notes demanding money: on March 9 at BankRI, 76 Westminster Street, Providence, when he took \$5,740, and on March 17 at the Washington Trust Company, 180 Westminster Street, Providence, when he took \$2,575.

At Chiellini's plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Leavey said that the government could prove Chiellini's role in three note-jobs: on January 31, he handed a robbery note to a teller at Sovereign Bank, 255 Newport Avenue, East Providence, and fled with \$700; on

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February 2, he used a threatening note to take \$2,759 from a teller at BankRI, 99 South Broadway, East Providence; and on February 5, he drove a get-away vehicle while another man used a note to take \$1,930 from a teller at Coastway Credit Union, 1155 Reservoir Avenue, Cranston.

Powell and Chiellini are the second and third defendants sentenced to federal prison terms in **Project Bank Safe**, a federal initiative to prosecute so-called “note-job” bank robberies. On August 18, Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres sentenced **William Corvese**, of Johnston, to 46 months for two robberies in February.

Traditionally, the U.S. Attorney’s Office prosecutes federally only those bank robberies in which guns are used, but a rash of “note-jobs” early this year led to Project Bank Safe, a joint effort by the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the RI Attorney General’s Office.

Five additional defendants in Project Bank Safe have pleaded guilty to federal bank robbery charges and are awaiting sentencing. Federal charges are pending against five others.

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation** and the **Cranston, East Providence**, and **Providence** police departments investigated the robberies for which Powell and Chiellini were sentenced. Assistant U.S. Attorney Leavey is coordinating Project Bank Safe.

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